

Rabbit Hunting Prospects, 2010

Agriculture and Grassland Program Note 10-2

2009-10 Hunter Harvest

Our harvest estimates are based upon results from the 2009-10 Illinois Hunter Harvest Survey. An estimated 44,312 hunters harvested 189,254 rabbits. Rabbit hunters did quite a bit better in 2009-10 in comparison with the 2008-09 season. The number of hunters afield, daily harvest rate, and number of days afield all increased.

Table 1. Rabbit hunter participation and success 2003 through 2010.

Season	Harvest	Hunters	Average Rabbits/Trip	Total Days Hunting
2003-04	323,167	64,758	0.85	379,830
2004-05	429,460	78,768	1.14	375,013
2005-06	311,011	60,431	1.07	290,349
2006-07	267,782	49,350	1.13	237,525
2007-08	243,874	49,054	0.9	271,107
2008-09	154,216	40,077	0.71	216,255
2009-10	189,254	44,312	0.84	226,152
Percent change from 2008-09	+22.7%	+10.6%	+18.3%	+4.5%

Winter Weather 2009-10

Last winter's average temperatures in southern Illinois were about 2.0 degrees colder than last years. There were about 2.6 inches more snowfall than the previous winter.

Last winter's average temperatures in northern Illinois were about the same (about 0.4 degrees warmer) as last year's. There was 2.1 inches less snowfall than the previous winter.

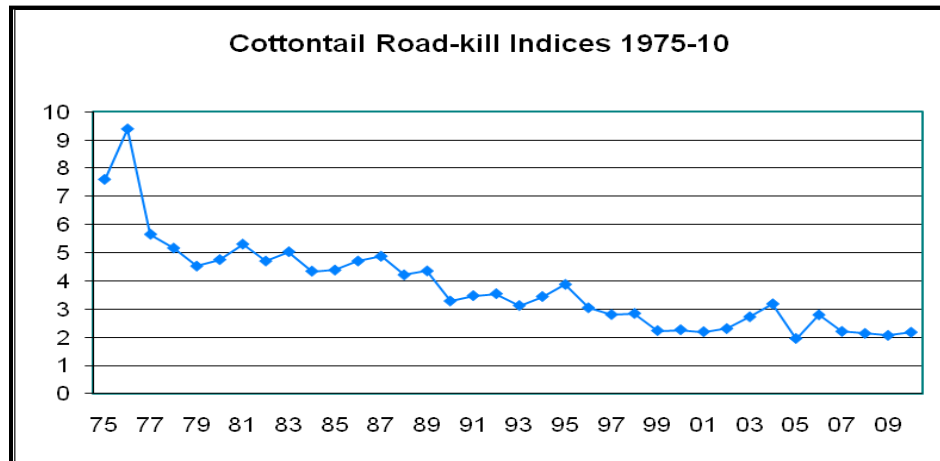
Rabbit Population Index

The method that provides the most reliable rabbit trend data for Illinois is the count of road-killed rabbits. The best available index of the fall cottontail population trends is the June-July road-kill index.

The southern Illinois index decreased only slightly (down 1.6%) and the northern Illinois rabbit index continued an upward trend and increased 15% from last year. The statewide index was up 5.9%. The difference between this year's and last year's rabbit indices was not statistically significant. Even though numbers are up in northern Illinois, more rabbits (9%) were counted in southern Illinois.



Figure 1. Cottontail road-kill indices 1975 through 2010.



2010 Season Outlook

Rabbit numbers should be about the same as last year's levels in southern Illinois and may be a bit higher in northern Illinois.

Crop harvest appears to be ahead of schedule. This may make hunting a little easier this year.

Best Areas

Look for farms with a mix of row crops, small grain and legumes with shrubby fencerows, old pasture and forest edges. The most productive areas for rabbit hunting continue to be in west-central and southern Illinois. Based on the average annual harvest estimates from 1997 through 2002, some of the top counties are: Bond, Calhoun, Clay, Clinton, Madison, Marion and Wayne.

Season Dates

November 6, 2010 – January 8, 2011 (North)

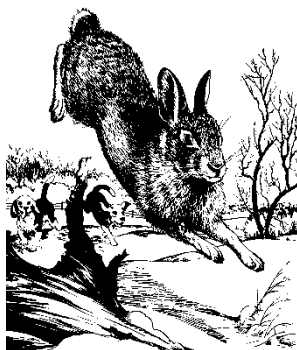
November 6, 2010 – January 22, 2011 (South)

Hours

Sunrise to Sunset

Bag Limits

4 per day with 10 in possession after the 3rd day



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